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BIG ISLAND LABOR ALLIANCE VOTES UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR GEOTHER-
MAL AS "MOST ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE ENERGY"

HILO -- The Big Island Labor Alliance, which includes all public employee and private industry unions representing residents from every sector of Island life, today announced unanimous support for geothermal energy development.

"We want to clear the air after a haze of misinformation. We have followed geothermal for 10 years and have examined the environmental, social and economic issues. It is clear that geothermal is the most environmentally sensitive, dependable, responsible form of energy for Hawaii", said Herbert Perreira, president of the Labor Alliance.

"Hawaii's oil dependency is destructive to both our environment and economy. Geothermal is thirteen times cleaner than oil and 40 times cleaner than coal", said Perreira.

"We also have examined charges launched by the mainland-based, mainland-funded Rainforest Action Network that geothermal is destroying "the last low-land tropical rainforest in the United States". This is not true and our members and fellow Hawaii residents need clean information about geothermal", said Eusebio Lapenia, Big Island director of the 8,000-member ILWU.

Lapenia said: "Hawaii has more than 1.2 million acres of land in forest reserves, national parks, wildlife refuges and private preserves. Fewer than 350 acres of forest area have been approved for geothermal well drilling. The areas designated isn't pristine forest. It is Class II and Class III forest "in decline" because it is infected with exotics such as strawberry guava spread by the wild pigs.

"This forest area has also been logged. The area was designated for geothermal drilling only after a land swap occurred at the suggestion of geothermal opponents to protect another area that really is prime Class I forest close to Volcanoes National Park. And finally, careful rules have been set up to involve botanists in researching and monitoring the forest area to control further spread of exotics."

"We are impressed with the controls and management plan that is being monitored by State and County planners and members of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

We respect the concerns of immediate neighbors and appreciate the need for good communication by all concerned parties. We think the newly established asset fund to mitigate impacts is an important tool established by the Hawaii County Planning Commission. Our support is based on these kinds of good planning and responsible management efforts because we know for a fact that on the mainland and elsewhere around the world, geothermal is a highly valued good neighbor.

Hawaii's ties to oil are many times more degrading to our environment than geothermal.

There is no question that we all need to be more conservation-minded, but conservation alone won't fulfill our state's energy needs and allow our residents to improve their quality of life. We think that the natural renewable energy provided by Hawaii's volcanoes is a gift, not a curse. With care and cooperation, it can be good for the immediate community and the entire island and State.

We believe our members already support geothermal, but we plan

to meet with them again to tell them about the intense campaign against geothermal by the mainland-based, mainland-funded Rainforest Action Network. We want to talk to our members about why this group is boycotting Hawaii products.

We are concerned about the motives behind the ads that this group is running on the mainland. The ads urge people across the country not to come here and not to buy Hawaiian sugar, macadamia nuts, coffee, etc.

Ads by the Rainforest Action Network say "Kiss Your Nuts Good-bye -- macadamia nuts, that is". Then they mispresent the facts about geothermal and slam every Hawaii agricultural and visitor industry worker. The ads are mean, unfair, even vulgar.

Ironically, the effect of their ad campaign is to promote the burning of oil for energy, which is much more destructive to the ozone and warming of the earth than clean geothermal energy. These can't be environmentalists; we wonder about their real motives", Lapenia said.

"They're giving Hawaii a black eye for using totally false information. This hurts every single one of our members personally in the pocketbook. We cannot stand by and let outsiders use their wealth to take jobs and homes away from our island families.

We are meeting with community and elected leaders to set the facts straight. We cannot let outsiders blackmail us into polluting Hawaii by forcing us to continue to burn oil. We won't be scared away from geothermal by outsiders with strange motives," Lapenia said.

Released by: The Big Island Labor Alliance (Firefighters, Local 1463; Hawaii Government Employees Association (H.G.E.A.); Hawaii State Teachers Association (H.S.T.A.); I.L.W.U.; International Association of Machinists (I.A.M.); International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W. - Locals 1260 and 1357); Laborers International Union, Local 368; Operating Engineers, Local 3; P.E.M.A.H.; S.H.O.P.O.; United Public Workers (U.P.W.).

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